



Wagner's Dramas and Greek Tragedy (Classic Reprint)

Pearl Cleveland Wilson

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Excerpt from Wagner's Dramas and Greek Tragedy

Aristotle's definition has often served as a starting-point for analyses of tragedy. But melody, which he calls the greatest of the embellishments, has long been separated from drama, and subject and style have changed with form. Poets have not remained musicians, as they were in ancient Greece, but one musician of modern times has written great tragedies. Richard Wagner composed ten dramas that are performed by opera companies, though they are almost as far from being operas as they are from being plays. To find as indissoluble a union of music and words in drama, we must go back to the choral odes of Attic tragedy. But while Greek tragedies are dramatic poems, 4th their range of expression extended by music, Wagner's works are dramatic symphonies, with their meaning made clear by words. It is not possible to compare them without being conscious, at every step, of this fundamental difference. Allowing for it, however, we find many points of resemblance.

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